

City officials express concerns about cleanup plans for park

By Brent Shrum
Kootenai Valley Record

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"I'd like the property clean - as much as we can possibly do that while we're there," Mayor Doug Roll told EPA representatives during a meeting last week at City Hall.

The agency is developing several alternatives for cleanup

of the site, a portion of which is now occupied by the city's Riverfront Park. The various options, with an agency-preferred alternative to be identified, will be released for public comment this summer prior to a final decision. According to EPA project managers, some combination of cleanup and containment is likely.

City officials noted that they expect the park, which includes the new Fred Brown Pavilion, to be heavily used, and that commercial development is possible on other sections of the former W.R. Grace property. They pointed to potential problems with subsurface

contamination that may be left behind.

"I'm in construction, and I know if you build a building you have to go 30 inches down," said Councilman Ron Carter.

Local EPA project manager Mike Cirian said cleanup crews already "chased" underground vermiculite on portions of the property that have been cleaned, and those areas aren't likely to be cleaned again.

"To take that off and go back down looking for more, that's kind of unfeasible," he said.

But other portions of the site, not currently open to the public,

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Libby City Council members and city street supervisor Corky Pape plan the future of Riverfront Park. Preliminary plans include moving the road that enters the park from Highway 37 to alleviate visibility problems.

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Cleanup

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show visible vermiculite and will be thoroughly gone over, Cirian said.

The cleanup could include removal of vermiculite on or near the surface while covering

the area with clean soil to reduce exposure hazards. Long-term funding is available to address any issues that may arise with future excavations, EPA representatives noted.

Roll, however, said those

funds should be reserved for the unknown and that any known contamination should be removed the first time around.

"A lot of this stuff down here, we know about," he said.